

SOAPSTone Strategy for Reading and Writing*(ideas by Ogden Morse; College Board)*

The process of analysis and composition requires the understanding that a good piece of writing requires careful planning. Each part of the written work is integral, and when combined with other parts in subtle or complex ways, creates an overall, effective piece that communicates something of value to the reader. It is our goal to recognize each important part of the writing that we study this year, with the hopes that we will begin to incorporate such techniques in our own writing so that it may be most effective. The following technique will be most helpful in gaining this important skill.

SOAPSTone (Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject, Tone) is an acronym for a series of questions that a reader must ask, find proof from the written composition, and answer to prepare a written analysis of a piece. Writers, too, must ask and answer these questions as they prepare to compose an effective work of prose.

Who is the Speaker? What is the **voice** that is being presented? **Who** is this person who is narrating or describing, or arguing? **How** do you know this information?

What is the Occasion? What is the context or **time and place** that may have prompted the writing? What is the “larger” occasion (i.e., an environment of ideas or emotions based on the war in Iraq) or the “immediate” occasion (i.e., an event or situation that triggers a response such as the tsunami tragedy) that influenced the writer to respond? **How** do you know?

Who is the Audience? Who does the author intend to address in this piece? Is it one specific person, a targeted group, or a general audience? **How** do you know?

What is the Purpose? What is the author trying to argue? What does he want his audience to feel or experience? In a sense, what is the author’s reason for writing this piece? **How** do you know?

What is the Subject? What is the general focus of this piece? This should be stated in a few words or phrases. **How** do you know?

What is the Tone? What is the attitude that this author presents about his subject toward his audience? How does the tone contribute to greater meaning in the piece? **How** is it achieved?(use the list of tone words you were given)

***Note:** It is important to notice the repetition of “how” in each of the categories above. To answer each question of “how,” the reader is forced to go back to the text to find ample proof to support the answer. This is extremely helpful in the analysis of a text. If one were to use the same set of questions in the preparation of **writing a text**, those answers become the plan a writer constructs to create greater meaning to the essay. If a writer is forced to reflect and answer the “hows” before constructing an essay, he will most likely produce a more organized, effective essay.*